The Quid Novi

45/15

MONTREAL, QC MCGILL UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF LAW - FACULTÉ DE DROIT DE L'UNIVERSITÉ MCGILL 20 FEB 2024

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Pablo Mhanna-Sandoval | 2L

It's going to be a good one, folks.

It's Quid issues like these that remind me how fortunate I am to be a part of the McGill Law community. It's a community not only separated by space, with graduates ending up accross different continents and industries, but also by time. As Canada's oldest law faculty, there's some history to this place and its traditions. Uncovering even a small facet of it is hard work, as history undergrads can confirm. It's why I am so proud and grateful for a piece contributed by LSA VP Ongoing Events Matthew Boulden this week.

In an enjoyable investigative piece, Matthew has made it his mission to pin down the date of the first ever Skit Nite at the McGill Faculty of Law. He's reached out to alumni for first-hand accounts, combed the archives of our very own Quid Novi, and likely pushed himself to the brink of insanity.

The final product is both a highly entertaining and historically invaluable contribution to our community's understanding and awareness of itself. For this, the Quid Novi heartfully thanks you, Matthew.

Other pieces in this week's edition are varied, from an open letter to McGill Law students from the AMPL to what I hope is a satirical marriage and pre-nuptial agreement between three 1Ls. Enjoy!

CETTE SEMAINE...

INSIGHTS

2 | THREE 1LS WALK INTO A BISTRO ON VALENTINE'S...

4 | THE OLYMPIC STADIUM'S GLOBAL LEGACY
A Tale of Corruption, Politics, and 30 Years of Debt

6 | THE HISTORY OF SKIT NITE
Tracing Mcgill Law's Oldest Tradition

13 | THE SILENT GENOCIDE

14 | THE DECLINE OF THE SSMU

COMMUNAUTÉ

2 | AMPL LETTER TO STUDENTS

AMPL LETTER TO STUDENTS

AMPL / AMPD

Dear Students at the Faculty of Law, McGill University,

Please allow us to take a few minutes of your time to explain the current negotiation situation between the law professors' Union and the University.

The strike action held by law professors on Tuesday 13 February 2024 was supported by numerous faculty members, students and members of staff, some of whom took unpaid leave to participate. The mandate for the strike was given to the Association of McGill Professors of Law ('AMPL') in December 2023 with close to 90% support of its members. To pursue such a mandate was the result of a very difficult choice that the Association had hoped to be able to avoid during more than a year of negotiations with McGill. Tuesday's strike sent a strong signal to the University, to colleagues and students and to the public. In McGill's 203 year-long history, this was the first time that a unit of their professorial staff had conducted a strike – an event which has been widely noted far beyond McGill and Montreal and which invites us to reflect on its justifications but also on its place in our community at the Faculty of Law.

La conduite de l'Université dans les négociations a été caractérisée dans une large mesure par des tactiques dilatoires, le refus d'expliquer, et encore moins de justifier, le rejet général des propositions de l'Association, l'acceptation de très peu de sessions de négociation convenues (nous n'en avons que deux d'ici la fin du mois d'avril), l'arrivée aux sessions sans aucune préparation préalable ni examen des propositions qui leur ont été fournies des semaines ou des mois à l'avance, et l'annulation des réunions à la dernière minute. Ce sont là des tactiques bien connues en droit de travail collectif pour épuiser l'autre partie physiquement, mentalement et émotionnellement, même si cette « autre partie » est issue de la même université et de la même communauté de professeur.e.s. Les choix stratégiques faits par l'université elle-même reflètent une tension fondamentale qui sous-tend notre impasse historique : une impasse non seulement entre deux parties à la table des négociations, mais aussi entre deux positions fondamentalement opposées sur la manière de travailler ensemble, de prendre des décisions sur la base du respect mutuel, de la confiance et de la collégialité, et de traiter tout le monde de manière équitable. Plus profondément encore, le désaccord porte sur la question de savoir si la communauté des éducateur.e.s et des apprenants, des mentors et des mentorés, des citoyens et des futurs dirigeants est un collegium incarné ou une collection d'individus atomisés et gouvernés par une hierarchie qui nous contrôle. Vos enseignant.e.s aspirent à une communauté de respect, inclusivité et égalité.

What the University's conduct at the bargaining table has shown, over more than a year, is a deep commitment to maintaining a status quo of unilateral decision-making. Its negotiators generally seek to preserve centralized authority to decide matters without robust processes of consultation and participation, and free of the burden to provide reasoned justifications for discretionary decisions. This stance is in stark contrast with what the Association has been struggling to have recognized and put into practice, namely a collegial and collaborative governance model, one in which professors share meaningfully with the University policy-setting and decision-making. Through collective bargaining, we have made some incremental progress in this regard. But where we have, the University has still refused to enshrine its regulations, with agreed amendments, in the collective agreement. It insists, contrary to an unbroken line of labour law cases confirmed as recently as last year by the QC Superior Court (Brandt Tractor), that it can reserve to itself the authority to change unilaterally our employment rights and obligations over the course of the collective agreement. This amounts to asking us to agree to a contract that can be varied at its pleasure. Brandt Tractor reaffirmed that we would violate our duty to represent our members were we to agree to such provisions.

Thus far, you may already ask yourselves how this should affect or even concern you. We take this opportunity to share because we believe this process concerns – at its heart – fundamental questions of justice. Justice not as a lofty ideal in abstract terms, but as a lived principle. It includes respect for the rule of law and rejection of arbitrariness. These are among the core commitments that a lawyer lives by and they inform the lawyer's understanding and practice of law. These principles also reflect the protection law provides to everyone, and which we are trying to teach in our classes with you. We think that this current moment in the Law Faculty's history matters to you for those reasons. And, what is more, a legal education at an institution such as ours is a big part of your lives of which you should be proud.

En outre, nous sommes toujours confrontés à plusieurs questions en suspens. Nous n'avons pas encore réussi à obtenir un accord pour réformer les aspects clés du modèle actuel, selon lequel des décisions cruciales -

telles que la nomination des enseignants, la nomination du doyen, l'attribution de la rémunération au mérite, l'attribution des fonds de recherche et des congés de recherche - sont prises sans un processus inclusif et représentatif de délibération et de prise de décision.

The University's refusal to let go of its centralized discretionary and hierarchical model – a model that has come increasingly to characterize McGill over the last two decades – is decried by the substance of what is being taught in classrooms throughout the Law Faculty. Nonetheless, the model is being defended through the use of public monies to retain one of the most effective union-breaking lawyers in the city. He has the explicit mandate to continue challenging AMPL's right to exist before the courts. The untold hours of work by colleagues to support and defend the Association against the University's chosen tactics are also an enormous waste. Those hours could go instead to the design of innovative curricular programs and towards better infrastructure to support and empower equity-seeking students, staff and faculty.

In writing this note to you today, we, members of AMPL's negotiating team, are inviting you to reflect on your role in this situation, as law students at an internationally renowned institution of higher education, as emerging jurists and as advocates for justice and the rule of law. Justice is the desideratum we aim for yet can never claim to have achieved. For justice to emerge, it requires a continued effort to live up to its demands in every setting, large and small. That is how justice should guide our conduct in all our travails as lawyers, citizens, community members, and peers.

We appreciate the "perfect storm" that many of you must sense around you these days, having barely emerged from the devastating and atomizing experience of lock-down and life online. No one – certainly not us – seeks yet another existential challenge as we navigate our careers, families and obligations.

Vos réflexions sont les bienvenues et nous restons toujours disponibles en tant qu'interlocuteurs pour explorer ces questions et d'autres. Nous espérons que vous les étudiant.e.s et une nouvelle génération de juristes professionnels - envisagerez d'exprimer votre opinion à notre communauté en ce moment. Vos voix, et surtout votre poids moral et civique, comptent énormément.

Bien à vous,
Kirsten Anker
Evan Fox-Decent
Richard Janda
Peer Zumbansen

Negotiation team, Association of McGill Professors of Law

Montréal, 16 February 2024

What are *Overheards*?

Overheards are anonymously submitted quotes and jokes overheard by your fellow McGillians at the Faculty of Law. Send us your favourite memes of the week by Thursday at 5pm and let us share the laughter with the Quid Novi community!

OVERHEARD

Prof: "I don't call it Girl Math, I prefer 'aspirational economics'"

1L: "This. ***HILL***."

Prof: "Democracy is a farce!" *jumps in place*

THREE 1LS WALK INTO A BISTRO ON VALENTINE'S...

Anonymous

In our friend group, three of us are single—so we decided to take each other out for Valentine's Day this year. At dinner, we decided to further commit ourselves to each other. What follows below is our marriage and pre-nuptial agreement, which we wish to immortalize in the Quid.

Marriage and Pre-Nuptial 10-Year Agreement

Yearly events for Valentine's Day:

1. Dinner, flowers, and nails
2. Tattoos and brunch
3. Piercings and Michelin-Starred dinner
4. Gold tooth and high tea
5. Vegas wedding
6. Monaco retreat
7. Maldives late honeymoon
8. Volcano hotel stay
9. Antarctica cruise
10. Valentine's year

Terms:

1. Always and only the three signing parties, except for year five as necessary (e.g., baby mama), can be involved.
2. We contribute our individual financial costs for the first five years. After the wedding (starting year six), we pay the lumpsum split proportionately by income.
3. Under extenuating circumstances only, each party is allowed one "one year pass" where they may delay the ten year plan. They cannot be stacked.
4. Death contingency: In case of death of one of the parties, the contract carries on and the living party/parties must travel with the ashes of the lost loved one(s).

   4.1 The surviving loved one(s) must take a celebratory photo with the ashes.

5. A material souvenir must be acquired every year. The souvenir cannot be purchased, it must be received as a gift or be something stolen.
6. One criminally sanctionable offence must be planned, executed, and gotten away with over the ten year period.

   6.1 Must be "drank" to the point of automatism during the execution of the offence.

7. We must be "drank," in general.
8. No planning can occur before The [redacted]'s birthday or after The [redacted]'s birthday (other than year ten).
9. No children before the end of the agreement unless approval is received by the other parties unanimously.
10. Divorce provision: the provisions of this contract may be declared invalid notwithstanding their regular validity if the parties so wish and unanimously agree.

Object: Valentine's Day
Cause: Marital Bliss

Signed at Monsieur B, Montréal, Québec, Canada on a napkin. Thank you to [redacted] for our restaurant recommendation. The salmon tartare was excellent—we all got it.

Signatures:

1. [redacted]
2. [redacted]
3. [redacted]

THE OLYMPIC STADIUM'S GLOBAL LEGACY

A Tale of Corruption, Politics, And 30 Years of Debt

Sophie Rehel | 1L

Premier Legault's recent announcement of an ambitious $870 million project to repair Montreal's Olympic stadium has stirred excitement and controversy.[1] Caroline Proulx, the Minister of Tourism, warned that without intervention, the stadium's aging roof could lead to its closure within a few years.[2] Proulx explained the potential of the renovations, suggesting they could attract major music acts like Taylor Swift and Beyoncé, bringing in "tremendous fiscal revenue" as well as concert-going tourists.[3] In light of this development, we find ourselves suitable to rehash the infamous story of how Montreal's Olympic Stadium became the city's most controversial landmark.

In 1970, bolstered by the resounding success of the 1967 World Fair and the recent acclaim garnered by the Expos, Montreal secured the 1976 Summer Olympics, triumphing over competing bids from Moscow and Los Angeles. On its face, this victory appeared as another

[1] Kalina Laframboise, "Quebec to dole out $870M for Olympic Stadium's new roof," *Global News* (5 February 2024) at 2, online: https://globalnews.ca/news/10272740/big-o-montreal-olympic-stadium-roof-funding-2024/.

[2] *Ibid* at 12.

[3] *Ibid* at 9—10.

potential milestone for the city. The promise extended to Montreal suggested a modestly designed and economically feasible Olympic venture, as Jean Drapeau articulated: "The Olympics can no more run a deficit than a man can have a baby."[4] Initial estimates projected the total cost of the Games to be $120 million, with $71 million designated for the construction of the Olympic Stadium.[5] Drapeau, alongside his chief engineer Claude Phaneuf, enlisted the services of the innovative French architect Roger Taillibert for the monumental task. However, the project encountered many challenges from its inception, grappling with labour disputes and ultimately commencing stadium construction eight months behind schedule. Over 530 potential working days between December 1974 and April 1976, construction workers staged strikes for a total of 155.[6] During a critical phase of construction, spanning from May to October 1975, less than a year before the scheduled opening ceremonies, unions ceased work entirely, firmly halting any progress. Moreover, the contracts offered to companies involved in the project were the subject of various corruption scandals, with Drapeau's close associate accepting a bribe from building contractor Regis Trudeau in the form of a lavish off-island chalet.[7]

By 1975, the deadline was looming, the initial cost estimation had nearly tripled, and the provincial government was unsatisfied with the progress. To gain control over the project and salvage the remaining time left for construction, the provincial government removed Taillibert and created the Olympics Installation Board.[8] Taillibert later stated that "the construction of the Olympic Park and stadium showed [him] a level of organized corruption, theft, mediocrity, sabotage and indifference that [he] had never witnessed before and [has] never witnessed since. The system failed, and every civil engineering firm involved knew they could just this veritable cash register and serve themselves."[9]

[4] Jack Todd, "1976 Montreal Olympics: Drapeau's baby from bid to billion-dollar bill, " *Montreal Gazette* (26 July 2016) at 20, online: https://montrealgazette.com/sports/1976-montreal-olympics-drapeaus-baby-from-bid-to-billion-dollar-bill.

[5] Paul Foisy, "The Montréal Olympics" (last modified 31 March 2016) at 7, online (encyclopedia): https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-montreal-olympics.

[6] Jack Todd, "The 40-year hangover: how the 1976 Olympics nearly broke Montreal," *The Guardian* (6 July 2016) at 19 [*The 40-year hangover*], online: https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/jul/06/40-year-hangover-1976-olympic-games-broke-montreal-canada.

[7] "Former high-ranking city official Gerard Niding and building contractor," *United Press International Archives* (1 October 1980) at 4, online: https://www.upi.com/Archives/1980/10/01/Former-high-ranking-city-official-Gerard-Niding-and-building-contractor/8027913090832/.

[8] *The 40-year hangover, supra* note 6 at 21.

[9] Everton Gayle, "How much does in cost to host an Olympic Games?" (last modified 9 September 2019) at 19, online: https://www.euronews.com/2016/08/05/how-much-does-it-cost-to-host-an-olympic-games.

The obstacles faced were not limited to the developmental phase leading up to the games; instead, the games themselves encountered challenges such as boycotts, a staggering $100M security expense, rampant doping accusations, and the ignominy of being the first host nation to fail to secure a gold medal on home soil.[10] Despite the relative success of the games, Montreal was left with a daunting $1.6B debt, which took 30 years to pay off.[11] The state of the Olympic stadium also remained an active concern, with several subsequent incidents further tarnishing its legacy. In the 1980s, a fire broke out in the tower, while in 1986, a segment of the structure plummeted onto the baseball field, prompting the Expos to postpone a game. Furthermore, in 1991, a massive 55-tonne concrete slab crashed onto an unoccupied walkway.[12] An orange Kevlar covering was eventually installed in April 1987 instead of the promised retractable roof. Still, it suffered frequent tears until its replacement in 1998 with a fixed roof, incurring an additional $37M expense.[13] Yet, in the following year's winter, the new roof succumbed to heavy snowfall, causing a deluge of ice to fall onto workers preparing for a motor show below.[14] Presently, despite Montreal's winter snowfalls averaging approximately 50cm per month, the Olympic Stadium remains only usable if the snow accumulates 3cm.

The enduring legacy of corruption and deceit stemming from the 1976 games, compounded by the October Crisis and the escalating separatist fervor, played a pivotal role in the election victory of René Lévesque's Parti Québécois. Subsequent years witnessed profound sociopolitical transformations in the province, yet Montreal never fully regained its status as a preeminent North American hub for commerce, culture, and entertainment. Despite the enduring jests aimed at the stadium's shortcomings and decades of calls for its demolition, we are confronted again with yet another proposed alteration - and a pricey one. Against a backdrop of economic downturn, escalating rates of homelessness, labour strikes, and a transit system hemorrhaging funds annually, it is no surprise that the announcement has been met with widespread disapproval. Evidently, little has changed in Quebec's relationship with its labour unions and fiscal priorities over the past half-century, with with dubious profit-driven initiatives taking precedence over the city's and its inhabitants' welfare.

[10] *The 40-year hangover, supra* note 6 at 23—24.

[11] *Ibid* at 7.

[12] *Ibid* at 30.

[13] *Ibid* at 31.

[14] Ibid at 32.

THE HISTORY OF SKIT NITE

Tracing McGill Law's Oldest Tradition

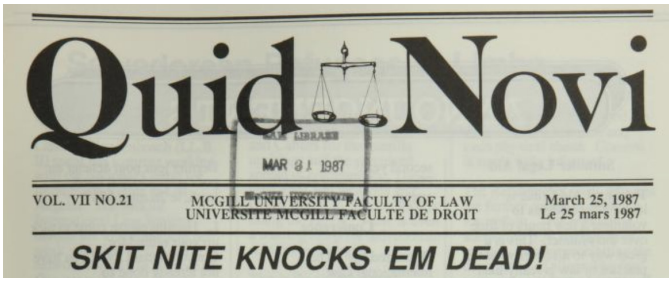
Matthew Boulden | 3L, VP Ongoing Events

In light of this year's Skit Nite theme, let's go *Back to the Past* of this event's long and intriguing history.

For these past two years, I have had the honour of being one of Skit Nite's directors alongside Justine Blanchette-Sirois. After three years of Skit Nites cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic (2020, 2021, and 2022), Justine and I were determined to bring back this event with "La Renaissance of Skit Nite" in 2023. To our surprise, it worked–and the response was unimaginable.

We received such kind and positive feedback from students and professors alike. We'd like to express our deepest gratitude to all of you who attended. This night really is unlike any other, and it's easy to see why Skit Nite has endured for so long. Over countless generations, McGill Law students have marvelled at this unique and spectacular event. Its history stretches back further than anyone can recall. This set me on a mission to uncover the lore of Skit Nite and better understand this mysterious and iconic tradition.

What I learned both shocked and amazed me; what follows are the results of my investigation. I primarily used archived Quid Novi publications, along with some primary research conducted with former Skit Nite attendees from decades past. I acknowledge that some information might be missing, so I encourage alumni to reach out to enrich this research with their first-hand accounts.


Quid Novi

VOL. VII NO.21 | MCGILL UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF LAW / UNIVERSITE MCGILL FACULTE DE DROIT | March 25, 1987 / Le 25 mars 1987

SKIT NITE KNOCKS 'EM DEAD!

Discovering the Origins of Skit Nite

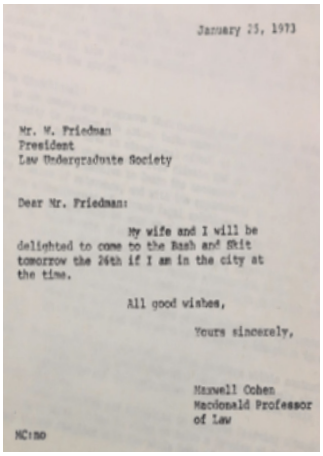
I began my research set on determining when Skit Nite was born; the Committee was looking to sell branded merch referencing Skit Nite's founding year. It was important for us to be as accurate as possible in determining that date. At the same time, would my seeking out this information destroy the magic of Skit Nite's mysterious unknown origins?

We all know that Skit Nite has been around for ages – it seems older than any McGill Law professors can remember. As one student wrote in 1990, when summarizing the murky history of Skit Nite: "last year there was a Skit Night and there was one before that, and if we're pushed we will admit that there was one before that year too".[1] It seemed that discovering Skit Nite's founding year was going to be harder than I thought.

The earliest mention of the term "Skit Nite" in the archives can be found in a 1979 McGill Daily article, which states that Skit Nite was "[w]here law students and professors emerge from their casebooks for an evening of crudity, debauchery and self-depreciation".[2] The event has not drifted too much from its roots–we certainly still self-deprecate–although perhaps we've cut out some of the crudity and debauchery. This article indicated that Skit Nite formally bore the title "Paper Waste II" but, unfortunately, I could find no record of "Paper Waste II" in the McGill Archives.

However, some clues allowed me to trace the paper trail back to a letter written by Dean Maxwell Cohen, addressed to the Law Undergraduate Society President.

The Dean wrote that he would be delighted to attend the "Bash and Skit" happening on January 26, 1973. At its genesis, Skit Nite's name was in constant flux; changing many times over the decade until it settled upon "Skit Nite" by 1979. Even after this date, some students continued to erroneously spell it "Skit Night".[3]


January 25, 1973

Mr. W. Friedman
President
Law Undergraduate Society

Dear Mr. Friedman:

My wife and I will be delighted to come to the Bash and Skit tomorrow the 26th if I am in the city at the time.

All good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Maxwell Cohen
Macdonald Professor of Law

MC:mo

Montreal
Monday
March 19, 1979
Volume 68, No. 91

The McGill Daily

Canada's Only Students' Daily

Jeff Matus

These two young lovelies typify the grace and charm of the average McGill law student. Unfortunately, these fine, imminently attractive qualities are exhibited but once a year. The occasion is Skit Nite, formally called Paper Waste II, where law students and professors emerge from their casebooks for an evening of crudity, debauchery and self-deprecation.

[1] Jim O'Brien, "A Short History of Skit Nite", *Quid Novi*, 11:13 (November 26, 1990) at 2.

[2] *The McGill Daily*, 68: 91 (March 19, 1979) at 1.

[3] *Supra,* note 1.

At this point I realised I had to search further back; I needed first hand accounts. In early 2023, Dean Leckey shared the poster graphic for "Skit Nite: La Renaissance" on his LinkedIn. In the comments of this post, it could be read that "Skit Nite" was amongst my fondest and most cherished memories of my McGill Law School years. I believe that the title of our 1972 skit was "A Comedy Tonight".

A primary source! Me Ian Solloway (BCL 1973). When I reached out to him, he informed me that, while he didn't know which year Skit Nite was founded, "there was a Skit Nite in 1970, the year preceding ours. So, Skit Nite goes back at least 54 years and probably more". Bingo. Our oldest confirmed date yet.

I was then connected with Emeritus Professor Stephen Scott (BCL 1966), who began teaching at McGill Law in 1970. He informed me over email that "Skit Nite in its present form dates from some point in the 1970s, but I can't give you a date. It became longer and longer and a more elaborate production as time went on". He recalled that some of these prototype versions of Skit Nite date as far back as his time as a student, in the 1960s.

Unfortunately, dear reader, I don't really have an answer for you. The question as to when Skit Nite was founded becomes subjective and nearly impossible to answer: each year built on something that came before. Skit Nite was never suddenly born; but instead evolved out of something else that came before it. I left my investigation disappointed, without having found a decisive birth year, and overall exhausted from reading what felt like every edition of the Quid since its establishment. Maybe that's what it's all about? Perhaps picking a birth year is futile, a matter of opinion, and better left a mystery?

Stay with me. In the interest of providing you a satisfactory answer, I propose 1970 should be adopted as the event's birth date.[4] While, yes, the event only received its name in 1979, the essence of Skit Nite had been felt long before. We shouldn't, however, be too generous in our definition of the earliest Skit Nite. In the 1960s, what we now know as Skit Nite only consisted of a small gathering of students impersonating their Professors. With all this in mind, I suggest to you that 1970 is the best spot to mark Skit Nite's official beginning.

Now that we've (hopefully?) established a founding year for Skit Nite, let's take a journey down Skit Nite's memory lane. Taking a research categorization method from one of the greats, Ms. Taylor Swift, I have categorized this rich history into eras. It should be noted that some generalizations will be used for the sake of simplicity, and details may occasionally be overlooked. Now let's get into it.

The Lost Era : 1970s

I'll admit, little is known about this time period. The records are lacking and what remains are first-hand accounts of alumni who have been so kind to share their experiences with us. We do know, as discussed, that the name of the event was not finalized before 1979, going through several iterations along the way.

As Scott explained, "the elaborate event we know today was preceded by a less elaborate annual event which was stated even in my time as a law student" (1963-66). As Solloway describes, in these early years "Skit Night was always a production put on by the 2nd year class".

These early Skit Nites included sketches where students did impressions of their professors and the Dean. It appears that these Faculty members were present and watching from the audience. These evenings have been described as loud and raucous, in fact, apparently the Dean would even cancel the lectures of the following day! Perhaps something to ask Dean Leckey for March 14th…

It is unclear where these nights took place, whether there was a theme or team of writers, or even whether there was a charity raising function to them. Most traces of these evenings…lost.

The Classical Era : 1980s

The 80s: The extraordinary expansion of Skit Nite! Various revolutionary changes mark this period of unprecedented growth for the event. To kick off the decade, David Hirsh and Richard Kurland produced Skit Nite in 1982. It was described as follows:

> *"This is an evening where we entertain our own. Faculty members co-mingle with the student body in an extravaganza that promises laughter and good clean fun. Student skits poke fun at life in Chancellor Day."*[5]

It seems Hirsh and Kurland did an outstanding job, as they received high praise after their 1982 show: "The ovation goes out to David Hirsh and Richard Kurland for their superhuman success in directing what has been unanimously considered as the best Skit Nite ever".[6]

Hirsh and Kurland were the masterminds behind one of the most impactful evolutions of Skit Nite: the introduction of the theme. Hirsch described the theme as a way of changing "the show from a series of disjointed skits into a delightfully entertaining story".[7] They called their show "Malice in Wonderland". The event appeared to be a major undertaking as there were singers, classical guitarists, jugglers, and special characters featured in the storyline.

---

[4] See Christine Beltempo & Matt Osten "Why is This Nite Different Than All Other Nites", *Quid Novi* 27:8 (14 November 2006) at 5. Two co-producers of Skit Nite declared that "Skit Nite has been a tradition at the faculty of law since 1857 when Old Chancellor Day (then New Chancellor Day) created the event to promote creativity and smug in-jokes within the legal community". We can rule out this statement as the Old Chancellor Day building was not even constructed yet, let alone owned by the Faculty of Law (which happened in 1948). Perhaps this comment was made as a joke instead of a statement of historical fact.

[5] "Skit Nite", *Quid Novi*, 2:8 (29 October 1981) at 3.

[6] *Quid Novi,* 2:22 (11 March 1982) at 7.

[7] Pearl Eliadis, "Skit Nite Wants You!", *Quid Novi* (29 Sept 1982) at 3.

At this point, however, Skit Nite was not yet big enough to serve as a charity fundraiser; the revenue from the event merely allowed the production to break even, and profits were used to bolster the following year's funds.[8]

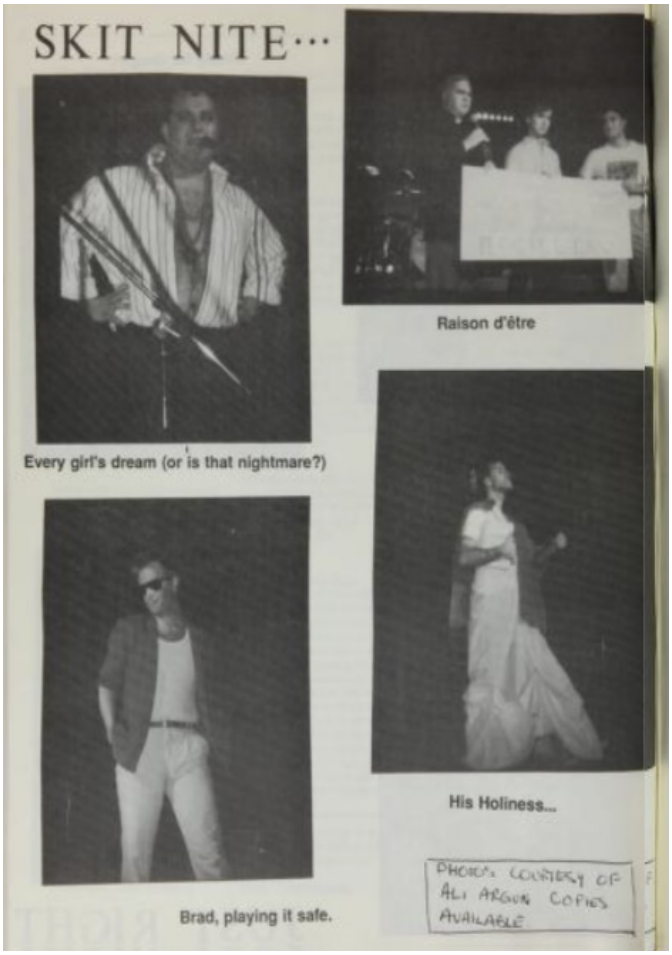
It appears that Skit Nite 1986, organized by Vince Gallo and Lenny Roth, was the first charity fundraiser. Skit Nite raised some $4000 for the Old Brewery Mission, a local shelter. The event appeared to be a large success, but wasn't without some production hiccups along the way – as expressed in this piece reproduced here. The author of this article, Terry Pether, defends these flaws as helping to show what Skit Nite is meant to be: "a bunch of law students collecting under the spotlight at the most languishing time of year to poke fun at anybody and everything that deserves the honour".[9]

T'was an evening of barbs and beers, music and mayhem woven together by the tight licks and beats of a super band and the straightman play of Mike Shuster who, as David Lawyerman, didn't miss a cue. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the stage crew or the audio guys. But the amateurish production flaws revealed Skit Nite for what it was meant to be -- just

The first record of a Skit Nite controversy happened during the 1986 production. Several students expressed their disapproval with one particular performance during the night. As one student wrote: "What is fascinating is that this sketch was not killed for being so unfunny and in such poor taste".[10] Organizers would later write back that they thought the criticisms were unjustified.[11]

In the following years, Skit Nite continued to grow rapidly. In the Fall of 1987, students organized a watch-party of the previous year's Skit Nite on video at the "Happy House Coffee Hour" (sound familiar?).[12] Skit Nite then saw some 400 people in attendance at its 1988 edition: "David Lawyerman". Skit Nite had officially taken flight.

The Skit Nite Committee raised $8,000 and even added a second charity, Chez Doris, a local women's shelter that year.[13] The money raised through sales of tickets, t-shirts and beer was used to offset the actual cost of the show; meanwhile donations were actively solicited from law students, businesses, professors and alumni.[14]



We also know that tickets only cost $5.00 at this time, and likely remained this low until the turn of the century.

Towards the end of the decade, Skit Nite starts to face some newer criticism : où est le français? "L'année passée, le spectacle était complètement anglais. I am sure that many in the audience would appreciate and understand a little more french on stage".[15] By 1989, the Committee decided to welcome suggestions from the student body for a Skit Nite theme. Interestingly, the French version of the call-out message stated they were looking for "tous des thèmes fortement incultures dans notre réalité québécoise".[16] Heureusement, Justine et Rayan s'assurent que l'on n'oublie pas la langue de Molière cette année.

The Golden Era : 1990s

With the previous decade of Skit Nite navigating both major additions and criticisms, the 1990s was set up for huge success. While some changes were implemented during this decade, Skit Nite found its groove. To kick off the decade, organizers Seth Dalfen, Kurt Johnson, and Gordo Levine hosted Skit Nite '91: "Fools in Law".[17] At this time, in-

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Terry Pether, "Skit Nite: A Yearly Favourite", *Quid Novi*, 6:22 (26 March 1986) at 4.

[10] Denise Giroux, "Letter to the Editor", *Quid Novi*, 6:22 (26 March 1986) at 7.

[11] *Quid Novi*, 6:23 (2 April 1986) at 2-6. I am sparing so much of the fascinating details and heated reactions coming out of the *Controversy of '86* (as I am now calling it). If you wish to have a look for yourself I would direct you to the following Quid articles: March 26, April 2, and April 9, 1986.

[12] "Skit Nite Video Extravaganza", *Quid Novi*, 8:8 (2 November 1987) at 1.

[13] Terry Pether, "Skit Nite, All Nite!", *Quid Novi*, 8:23 (28 March 1988) at 1.

[14] Teressa Scassa, "Skit Nite '87', *Quid Novi*, 7:13 (21 January 1987) at 1.

[15] "Letter to the Editor: Bilingualism", *Quid Novi*, 8:21 (14 March 1988)

[16] "Un Message du comité de "Skit Nite '89" Concours Troulver le Thème", *Quid Novi*, 9:9 (15 November 1988) at 4.

[17] "Skit Nite '91 "Fools in Law", *Quid Novi*, 11:20 (4, March 1991) at 1.

terest in participating on the Skit Nite Committee was so overwhelming that they held elections to decide the members. There remained controversy over Francophone participation on the Committee–one disappointed columnist wrote, "[m]alheuresement, cette année ne fut pas vraiment différente des autres avec très peu de participation francophone".[18]

Subsequent years also saw the need to introduce try-outs for skits due to high interest.[19] This component was re-introduce this year thanks to widespread interest in participating; auditions were warranted. I speculate that the existence of try-outs and elections for Skit Nite organizers are a good proxy indicating high participatory interest and event quality.

By Skit Nite '93, "Little Shop of Lawyers," the Committee added yet another charity to the list–including "Dans La Rue," a charity for struggling teenagers, along with Chez Doris and Old Brewery Mission. The event raised $12,000 for these charities.[20] This growth continued in the subsequent years with '94 "Sesame Street Legal,"[21] '95 "Fiddler on the Bench,"[22] and '96 Legality Bites".[23] This period saw the pinnacle of fundraising efforts, with the highest-ever record coming in just over $20,000.[24]

Then came Skit Nite 1998. Fundraising Chair Stephanie Taylor reported that the team had outdone itself and raised nearly $30,000; an absolutely astronomical number that raises doubts as to how it could ever be beaten.[25] The Skit Nite Committee during this era, had an extra arm, strictly for fundraising purposes. The fundraisers would regularly reach out to over 300 businesses and law firms, as well as solicit from students, professors, and alumni.[26]

After the turn of the century, Skit Nite was never able to fundraise as much; likely due to scrapping this fundraising team on the Committee. As an *obiter*, perhaps this is a part of Skit Nite that should be brought back for future years, and would allow more sources of fundraising besides solely ticket sales.

The Steady Era : 2000s

By the turn of the century, Skit Nite had grown so much, so fast. By this point, there wasn't much more to expand upon. The first few Skit Nites of this decade would carry over the massive success that was seen in the 90s. However, by the end of the decade, students' enthusiasm had apparently declined.

We are provided with a fascinating glimpse into what Skit Nite 2001 was like with the Quid article of 3L student Robert Leckey, as he was then.[27] He writes that Skit Nite has prospective students and law firm sponsors in attendance. Contrasted with the current sole-sponsor model, it seems at this time various law firms were involved in sponsoring the event in tandem. Leckey contemplated whether the outside presence of law firms was value-adding, writing, "[t]he evening also highlighted our complex and still inchoate relationship with law firm sponsors. Do we want them there contributing to charities or not?"[28]

It is unclear if the Faculty had invited prospective students to attend Skit Nite to get a sense of McGill Law in the past. Whether or not they received an invitation, Dean Leckey questions whether the event should have them in the audience, writing, "I'm left, though, ambivalent as to whether this is really a good event with which to introduce new students to the school".[29] We hope to have changed his mind, though perhaps additional primary source research is needed on that front.

With Skit Nite 2002, themed "Mind Trip," ticket prices went up to $20 (the same price we charge 22 years later today!). A new twist was added by organizers Jeff Feiner and Lawna Hurl: a "Best Skit Award" selected by a panel of judges.[30]

Skit Nite 2003 organizer Freddie Fischer made clear his vision for improving the quality of the show. His main priority was shortening the show to a more reasonable 2-3 hours down from, allegedly, 6 hours sometimes. He also had strict requirements for quality control of the acts, and did not shy away from editing or even cutting performances all together:

> *"The thing about performers, however, is that they do not like to have their acts touched. Furthermore, many believe their acts are beyond improvement. They are wrong. Not all acts are good from the start. Some acts are just plain bad, some acts are boring, some acts make no sense."*[31]

Another major change that

[18] Alexandre Gillespie, Greg Moore & Nancy Girard, "Skit Nite On Review", *Quid Novi*, 12:19 (23 March 1992) at 1.

[19] "Skit Nite", *Quid Novi*, 15:14 (27 February 1995) at 1.

[20] *Quid Novi*, 13:21, (29 March 1993) at 4.

[21] "Attention Creative Spirits", *Quid Novi,* 14:14 (17 January 1994) at 2.

[22] "Skit Nite "Fiddler on the Bench"", *Quid Novi*, 15:9 (16 January 1995) at 2.

[23] *Quid Novi,* 18:8 (27 October 1997) at 4.

[24] Kiri Vanikiotis, "A Part of Our Heritage", 16:17 (12 February 1996) at 5.

[25] Stephanie Taylor, "The Heat is On … It's Time to Beat $30,000", *Quid Novi*, 19:6 (26 October 1998) at 5.

[26] Seth Dalfen, "Fools in Law: Skit Nite 1991", *Quid Novi*, 11:23 (25 March 1991) at 9.

[27] Robert Leckey, "Thoughts on Skit Nite on the Other Hand", *Quid Novi*, 21:22 (20 March 2001) at 9.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] "Mind Trip Call for Skits", *Quid Novi*, 22:12 (22 January 2002) at 6.

[31] Freddie Fischer, "Skit Nite Hasn't Made Me Any Friends", *Quid Novi*, 23:20 (25 March 2003) at 3.

Fischer introduced, which has evolved to some extent, was the introduction of a "writing team [which] would be responsible for weaving a golden thread into the show, this team was responsible for fixing weak skits and filling up empty show space".[32] In essence, what Fischer introduced here were the modern-day Animateurs. It is not clear why this term is used now, their function is the same. However, today the Animateurs take on a much more expansive role for Skit Nite as a whole.

Throughout the 2000s there was a noticeable decline in the funds raised for charities. In the early years the event raised anywhere from $16,000 to $19,000, which is certainly an enormous amount.[33] However, fundraising would eventually decline as the years progressed. By the end of the decade, it seems the Fundraising Chair position on the Committee was scrapped and the only amount that would be donated to charity was from ticket sales.

Another major change from this decade was the changing locations for Skit Nite. While the early Skit Nites to take place were in the Old Chancellor Day Common Room, eventually a larger space was needed and so the event moved to the Student Union Ballroom which seats over 300.[34] By 2003, an even larger venue was required and so the event was moved to the Medley (now closed).[35] By 2009, Skit Nite had moved again, this time, to Club Soda - the same location used to this day.[36]

The Quid stumbled upon Skit Nite practice in full swing in the Moot Court .... Given the recent Oscar success of Slumdog Millionaire, could it be time for a Hollywood vs. Bollywood rematch?

The 2000s would see a surge of new technologies and mediums allowing Skit Nite to spread wider and entertain more than ever before. The first known Skit Nite email was introduced in 2002 with "Skitnite@lsa.lan.mcgill.ca,"[37] later followed by various others used throughout this time.[38] Skit Nite also introduced its first website, with Skit Nite 2006 "The Kasirer Code" at www.law.mcgill.ca/students/clubs/skitnite (unfortunately now a dead link). There was also unprecedented use of videos in the promotion and as actual parts of the show.[39]

The Modernization Era : 2010s

Prior to 2010, interest and attendance at Skit Nite was somehow dwindling. Luckily, in 2010-2011, a very dedicated and spirited Skit Nite legend, Charlie Feldman, took over. His efforts reignited Skit Nite with an unprecedented energy for years to come. His dedication to the show set the gold standard for Skit Nite production and quality.

After Skit Nite 2010 "A Night at the Law(scers)". Professor Janda stated that it was one of the best Skit Nites he had ever seen, as did many others in attendance.[40] The following year, Skit Nite had sold 310 tickets, an apparent record for around this time and an increase of 100 people from the year before.[41] It was clear that Feldman's back-to-back rounds of Skit Nite organization had bolstered student interest in Skit Nite.

During this time, funds were still being raised for the four main charities: Chez Doris, Dans la Rue, Share the Warmth, and the Mission Old Brewery. However, relying again solely on ticket sales to generate revenues, the funds raised for charity dropped down to about $3,000 during this decade.[42]

Moreover, an exclusive sponsorship arrangement was made with Blakes as the official -sole- sponsor of Skit Nite beginning in 2010. By 2014, however, Osler had taken its place as the new official sponsor of Skit Nite.[43]

This modernization period was particularly notable for its use of videos, both as promotion and entertainment during the show. Feldman created the Youtube channel "Skit Nite McGill" in 2010, where he uploaded video footage of Skit Nite. Later years would follow the trend, and upload all sorts of sketches, musical performances, and promotional videos on Youtube. By Skit

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] Ken McKay, "Skit Nite: A Resounding Success", *Quid Novi*, 24:20 (30 March 2004) at 11.

[34] "Skit Nite", *Quid Novi*, 9:19 (7 March 1989) at 7.

[35] Ken McKay, "Who's Got Skit Nite Fever?", *Quid Novi*, 24:13, (3 February 2004) at 3.

[36] Rachel Sevigny, "Did I Mention the Memo is Due After Skit Nite?", *Quid Novi*, 30:10, (10 March 2009) at 1.

[37] *Supra*, note 30.

[38] See all the known emails during this decade: skitnite@lsa.lan.mcgill.ca; skitnite2005@hotmail.com; skitnite@gmail.com; skitniterocks2009@gmail.com; mcgillskitnite@gmail.com.

[39] Lawna Hurl, "Sold Out", *Quid Novi*, 22:19 (19 March 2002) at 2-3.

[40] Charlie Feldman, "Skit Nite – On A Personal Note…" *Quid Novi*, 31:15 (16 March 2010) at 23..

[41] Charlie Feldman, "Some Q&As", *Quid Novi*, 32:15 (15 February 2011).

[42] Nicholas Choinière, "Skit Nite Success", *Quid Novi*, 33:19 (27 March 2012) at 7.

[43] Nicholas Choinière, "Skit Nite Success", *Quid Novi*, 35:18 (25 March 2014) at 7.

QUID NOVI

DROIT À L'IMAGE

Charlie Feldman (LAW II)

Skit Nite 2010

Skit Nite 2010 was held on Tuesday, March 9th at Club Soda.

Photos:
1 - Personal Statement Stew
2 - Stage in the City
3 - Dean Jutras
4 - Profs. Jukier and Van Praagh

The Skit Nite Committee thanks Blakes for being our sponsor and congratulates all the participants on a job well done!!

Nite 2018 "Law Skits Tonight" and 2019 "Tout le Monde en Parle," high-quality video footage of the entire show was filmed, edited, and uploaded to Youtube. These later years were especially advanced by a four-timer, highly talented Animateur, Antoine Godin-Landry.

The Silent Era : 2020-2022

Skit Nite "Occupation Trouble À La Faculté: A Bachelor's Degree" was scheduled for March 13th, 2020.[44] Days before the show, the Dean issued a notice that Skit Nite would have to be cancelled due to the global COVID-19 pandemic: "We deeply regret to announce that Skit Nite, perhaps for the first time ever, has been cancelled".[45] He was right; never before had Skit Nite been called off. This show, which hard-working students had poured their hearts into, would never take place. Nor would subsequent years of Skit Nite in 2021 or 2022. During the quiet period, any students who had ever seen a Skit Nite live would gradually complete their degrees, while new students, unaware of Skit Nite's former glory, would take their places.

The Renaissance Era : 2023

The pandemic left a whole generation of BCL/JD students who had never seen Skit Nite by the 2022-2023 academic year. Justine and I were fully aware that resuscitating Skit Nite, after years in darkness, would require an immense effort and risked completely flopping. This inspired the theme of Skit Nite 2023 "La Renaissance" as we made it our goal to bring this event back to life. We had to continue various traditions that were forged by 50 years of Skit Nite, and passed down to us.

We did, however, take a gamble on expanding the role of Animateurs; this time choosing a larger-than-usual team of six funny hosts to perform skits and guide the show. Perhaps in contrast to previous years, we hosted auditions for our Animateurs and found ourselves belly-laughing at the hilarious auditions of Marielle McCrum, Pablo Mhanna-Sandoval, Ali Hachem, Carolina Muñoz, Nick Doiron, and Rayan Tibiche-Dahmoune.

At "La Renaissance" on March 15, 2023, we were blown away by the enthusiasm of the students, and most of all, the quality of the performances. We were not sure how big Skit Nite could be, but gradually ticket sales rose all the way to 500 in attendance and raised over $10,000.

The Present

As I write this, Justine and I are gearing up for yet another spectacular Skit Nite. We are beyond proud and grateful for our amazing, smart, hilarious, creative, brilliant team of Animateurs, many of whom are returning for

[44] "Réporté au 2 Septembre – Law Skits Tonight with McGill Law", *Lion D'or (2020)*. Retrieved at <https://cabaretliondor.com/evenement/law-skits-tonight-with-mcgill-law/?id=1427&fbclid=IwAR2kLkYUMoNyOARKYm-19ACF3WDyPt1k8RqVj2r6W03IVkZViC27C3uNCJw>

[45] Cancelled - Skit Nite 2020 - Occupation Trouble: A Bachelor's Degree", *Faculty of McGill Law* (13 March 2020). Retrieved at<https://www.mcgill.ca/law/channels/event/cancelled-skit-nite-2020-occupation-trouble-bachelors-degree-319593>

a second time: Marie Jolicoeur-Becotte (our newbie), Carolina Muñoz Jasa, Pablo Mhanna-Sandoval, Marielle McCrum and Rayan Tibiche-Dahmoune. In addition, I must express an enormous debt of gratitude to Stephanie Kay, the LSA VP Communications and Skit Nite graphic designer for these past two years. She is responsible for making our beautiful posters and logos for both "La Renaissance" and "Back to le Futur," along with so much of these events' promotional content.

To pay homage to Skit Nite's rich past, and in the spirit of continuing this legacy into the future, Skit Nite 2024 proudly wears the title: "Back to le Futur". With Skit Nite's re-birth last year, it is time to step into this new era of Skit Nite. Le clin d'œil au FR/EN du titre se veut également une reconnaissance de la poursuite éternelle de la promotion du bilinguisme dans le spectacle, peu importe combien réussi (ou pas) par le passé.

As our last hurrah, "Back to le Futur" will be our biggest (self-inflicted) challenge yet. Ticket sales have been racing by, and we're likely to see many of your

favourites returning from "La Renaissance," including: The Sandy Cats' jams, Dean Leckey's vocals, Corey Mandelzys's video wizardry, and Dexter Deveau and Emma Butson as Mr. Civil and Mrs. Common Law. New performers will also take the stage, and be sure to impress you with their talent.

Into le Future

When conducting my Skit Nite investigation, I discovered Skit Nite is a time-honoured tradition that has brought students and Faculty members together for generations. It has a deep and beautiful history that should not be forgotten.

That being said, Skit Nite was never perfect and likely never will be; we must avoid putting the past on a too-high pedestal. Many improvements changed and shaped the event to become more inclusive and accessible to students. We've also seen how production and quality checks were implemented throughout the years; from adopting a theme, assembling a team of Animateurs, to hosting auditions for performers. We've also seen how attendance and fundraising have and will fluctuate. These long-term cycles of growth and contraction demonstrate the important impact any of us can have; not just for the years we attend McGill Law, but even for decades after.

Metric tons of work have been poured into Skit Nite to build it into the institution it is today. In a 1982 call-out for organizers, Pearl Eliadis wrote "Skit Nite needs more than just directors. It needs proud parents. Two dedicated souls to nurture and cherish this time-honoured institution".[46] Over forty years later, I couldn't agree more.

I am honoured and proud to have had the opportunity to carry this torch for two years of Skit Nite's long history. Last year, we proved, all together, that Skit Nite is a resilient and enduring event - it survives all *force(s) majeure(s)* thrown its way. Skit Nite could not be extinguished–not even after a global pandemic shut it down for a whole generation of students.

But if Skit Nite is to continue to grow in the post-Renaissance era, it will need new proud parents. Guardians who will not ignore nor idealise Skit Nite's past, but instead learn from it and build upon what generations before us have created, for the future cohorts of McGill Law.

For my parting words (yes, you've made it to the end of the article), I leave you with a quote I found during my investigation from Feldman, which particularly resonated with me. Taking his final bow from Skit Nite in 2011, he hoped that a future McGill Law student, maybe a decade from now, would search through the Quid archives to discover this rich history of Skit Nite. Going back to le passé was well worthwhile to uncover all of the above, I hope this makes Charlie proud:

> *"(As a side note, if you look in the Quid archives (in the Rare Books part of the library) you'll find some old Skit Nite recaps – I kind of hope someone stumbles on this a decade from now :-P)"*[47]

Special thank you to Justine Blanchette-Sirois, Jacob Shannon and Marielle McCrum for providing their excellent editing suggestions to this article.

[46] *Supra,* note 7.

[47] Charlie Feldman, "Skit Nite 2011!", *Quid Novi*, 32:18 (22 March 2011) at 15.

THE SILENT GENOCIDE

Ritchie Ngieme | 1L

After getting defeated by Ivory Coast's soccer team during the African Cup semi-finals, the DRC Leopards caught the eyes of millions of viewers by making a simple gesture.[1] Standing on the field, under the eyes of excited soccer enthusiasts, the players from the Congolese team had one hand over their mouth. Their other hand was shaped like a pistol and they each placed it at the side of their head. They stood in silence, symbolizing the unheard cries of a persecuted person. People wondered who they were referring to, not knowing that these players shed light on a genocide that has been going on for more than 20 years, a genocide that has taken the lives of more than 6 million people. Ironically, the war in the East of the DRC has been consistently underreported for decades and has only started to be a topic of conversation considering current conflict around the globe.[2]

What started the war?

The war plaguing the Eastern part of the Republic is very complex, due to the sheer number of international actors involved. However, researchers agree that the starting point of the instability was after 1994, following the genocide in Rwanda.[3] In brief, the 1994 Rwandan tragedy opposed two ethnic groups; the Hutu and the Tutsi, whom the Hutu exterminated. Amid the conflict, the persecuted Tutsi fled to other countries, namely the DRC, then known as Zaïre. The genocide ended with Paul Kagame, a Tutsi man, taking over the country, reasserting the rights of the persecuted group.[4] As a result of such turmoil, the Hutu were no longer in a position of power, and many fled to the DRC. Conflict ensued in Eastern Congo between Tutsi and Hutu refugees, with Paul Kagame's government financing the Tutsi established in Congo.[5]

During the mid-1990s, DRC President Mobutu Sese Seko, otherwise known as "The Leopard," did not appreciate the Rwandan conflict spilling over into Congolese territory and ordered the Tutsi to leave the DRC.[6] Although many Congolese citizens agreed with his message concerning Rwanda, Mobutu had already been in power for over 30 years, and his popularity with citizens gradually declined.[7] As such, the Rwandan and Ugandan governments used this weakness to help create the AFDL in 1996, which contained Congolese soldiers who wanted Mobutu to step down as dictator of the DRC.[8] The rebel group succeeded in dethroning Mobutu and Laurent Désiré Kabila quickly took power. After becoming president, Kabila demanded that the Ugandan and Rwandan rebels from the AFDL leave the DRC.[9] This decision upset the Tutsi residing in Congo and they managed to get financial support from Rwanda and Uganda to establish other rebel groups.[10]

With tensions rising, Kabila was assassinated and his son Joseph Kabila became president of the Republic. Concerns regarding his nationality and affiliation with Rwanda were raised throughout his presidency. Even though he managed to sign peace treaties with Rwanda and Uganda, he proceeded, in 2003, to create a new army composed of ancient rebels and appointed a Tutsi man, Laurent Nkunda, as the head of this new troop.[11] Nkunda rallied other Tutsi men and formed his new army, the CNDP, which took over the Kivu region.[12] Nkunda was neutralized, and his troops signed a treaty with the Congolese government to liberate imprisoned Tutsi soldiers and to accrue more political power within the country.[13] In 2013, ex-CNDP members felt as though the treaty had not been respected and created the M23.

Who to blame?

The M23 is the main rebel group wreaking havoc in Eastern Congolese villages.[14] Congolese authorities have numerously accused Rwanda of financing the organization, yet Paul Kagame refuses to acknowledge these claims, even though his government has historically provided funds for various Tutsi groups within the DRC.[15] Furthermore, it is important to note that the M23 originated from Tutsi CNDP soldiers who were defeated by the official Congolese army. Given the circumstances, I posit that it would not be far-fetched to state that neighbouring governments have had a role in helping the M23 take control of Eastern DRC.

However, it would be disingenuous to fully attribute the blame to countries outside of the DRC itself. Congo suffers from notorious corruption issues, and several politicians have been exposed for utilizing public funds to satisfy their personal needs.[16] Having been to the country in 2017, I observed that the war in North Kivu was not a topic of conversation among people residing

[1] https://eng.fatshimetrie.org/2024/02/08/leopards-of-the-drc-when-football-denounces-the-massacres-in-the-east-of-the-country/.
[2] *Ibid.*

[3] https://cla.umn.edu/chgs/holocaust-genocide-education/resource-guides/rwanda#:~:text=Introduction,and%20UN%20peacekeepers%20stood%20by.
[4] *Ibid.*

[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-5dioc092T0.
[6] *Ibid.*

[7] https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mobutu-Sese-Seko.
[8] http://www.mapping-report.org/en/first-congo-war-and-afdl-regime/.

[9] https://reliefweb.int/report/angola/how-kabila-lost-his-way-performance-laurent-désiré-kabilas-government/.
[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Supra* note 5.

[12] *Ibid.*
[13] *Ibid.*

[14] https://ipisresearch.be/weekly-briefing/why-m23-is-not-your-average-rebel-group/.
[15] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2012/7/9/rwandas-kagame-denies-funding-drc-rebels.

[16] https://www.u4.no/publications/democratic-republic-of-congo-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption/fullversion#introduction.

in the capital, Kinshasa. Occasionally, protests were calling out the situation, but these instances were rare. This reality is even observable through media, as I noticed that athletic events, such as the African Cup or *les Jeux de la francophonie* received much more exposure than the people whose rights are constantly being violated. In many regions of the DRC outside of the capital and other metropolitan cities, such as Lubumbashi, there is a severe lack of investment. Much of the territory is unexploited, which makes the conflict even harder to address.[1] Essentially, how is the army supposed to eradicate this crisis when there are insufficient funds to train the army and the territory being targeted is difficult to navigate? Successive corruption-ridden regimes, a lack of national unity and lack of organization have hindered the DRC's state capacity to address any of these crises.

Other Vested Interests

While a significant part of the war is attributed to ethnic feuds, the DRC is also a source of interest for other countries due to its abundance of natural resources. Congo, specifically its Eastern region, has one of the richest subsoils, which includes diamond, gold, copper, rubber, lithium, cobalt and many more resources.[2] The DRC produces almost 80% of coltan around the world, a mineral that is essential to produce cell phones.[3] Considering all that Congo has at its disposal, it is no wonder that it attracts many international companies.[4] These corporations and investors actively invest billions of dollars in the mining sector and tend to exploit the population in these already vulnerable sectors.[5] There have also been reports of rebels controlling access to mines and trading resources with certain international companies.[6]

The Message

Congo is bleeding every day, and it hurts to see such a beautiful country crumble under violence. No matter who caused the conflict, it is important to remember that the people suffering are the citizens caught in the crossfire, losing their lives and their sense of self. As such, I hope that everyone who gets the chance to read this article does even more research on this conflict and raises awareness, not just by using hashtags on Instagram but by educating people on this humanitarian crisis. The fact that such a genocide has been swept under the rug for years upon years shows that humans tend to remain silent, so long as an issue does not directly affect them. Despite this though, I hope that whoever reads this article also gets the chance to learn more about Congo's rich culture and history. The DRC has so much to offer, and people will only realize this if there is a spread of awareness.

[1] https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/.

[2] https://www.britannica.com/place/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo/Resources-and-power#:~:text=Minerals%20found%20in%20Katanga%20include,)%2C%20uranium%2C%20and%20platinum.

[3] https://uwaterloo.ca/earth-sciences-museum/resources/detailed-rocks-and-minerals-articles/coltan#:~:text=Approximately%2080%25%20of%20the%20world%27s,to%20get%20the%20Coltan%20below.

[4] https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/democratic-republic-congo-mining-and-minerals.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Supra* note 5.

LE QUID EST À LA RECHERCHE DE CHRONIQUEURS FRANCOPHONES

NOUS RECHERCHONS DES CHRONIQUEURS ET CHRONIQUEUSES FRANCOPHONES POUR SE JOINDRE À NOTRE ÉQUIPE! LES CHRONIQUEURS ET CHRONIQUEUSES SONT RESPONSABLES DE LA SOUMISSION RÉGULIÈRE DE CONTRIBUTIONS AU QUID. C'EST UN POSTE IDÉAL POUR PRATIQUER VOS COMPÉTENCES EN ÉCRITURE OU VOTRE LANGUE SECONDE ET PEUT-ÊTRE ACQUÉRIR UNE CERTAINE NOTORIÉTÉ AUPRÈS DE VOS CAMARADES DE CLASSE!

VOUS AVEZ SEULEMENT BESOIN DE CONTRIBUER UN ARTICLE AU QUID À CHAQUE TROIS SEMAINES.
SI ÇA VOUS INTÉRESSE, ENVOYEZ UN COURRIEL À QUID.LAW@MCGILL.CA .

THE DECLINE OF THE SSMU

Jamie Fabian | 2L

The last-minute decision of the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) to cancel a meeting with MP Anthony Housefather because of his position on the Israel-Hamas war is the most recent action undertaken by the SSMU to delegitimize itself. Indeed, the SSMU has become completely incapable of abiding by its mandate while depleting all semblance of credibility. Some argue that the SSMU'S credibility issues began on October 7, 2023, but I would argue that the situation has been in the making for years. Indeed, it all started in 2016, when the SSMU's Judicial Board ruled that the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) motion to the General Assembly violated the SSMU Constitution. Problem solved, right? Not so much. In 2021, the Judicial Board reversed the decision by claiming that taking several anti-Israel stances was not in violation of the SSMU Constitution, which directly undermines the previous decision. This decision also seemed

to disregard the SSMU Constitution, which prohibits criticisms of a particular country. Additionally, in 2021, three subsequent decisions to support Palestinian liberation were also approved by the same Judicial Board. In a decision rendered on January 19, 2021, the Judicial Board also clarified that the decision supersedes the 2016 ruling. For a Judicial Board to have the authority to overturn previous decisions while the legislation remains unchanged severely undermines the credibility of both the Judicial Board and the SSMU as it keeps such a system in place. Students who went to the Judicial Board to seek justice could not expect impartial justice, but rather justice subjected to whoever SSMU appointed, where BDS was the flavour of the day.

Fast forward to 2023, the SSMU refuses to disassociate themselves from the Students in Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR), a group that openly endorsed and celebrated Hamas's mass murder of 1,200 civilians besides the brutalization, mass rape, and sexual violence that accompanied this act.[1] Amazingly, within a month of Israel's counterattacks, the SSMU allowed a referendum to take place that condemned… not Hamas…but Israel in what can only be referred to as an act of "Holocaust Inversion," equating Israel with Nazi Germany. It was at this point that the merry gangs of antisemites from SPHR went gallivanting around campus, making Jews feel unsafe and targeted by the tacit endorsement by the SSMU of SPHR's stance. When the Jewish community explained why this behaviour was antisemitic, we were told that "it's not actually antisemitism," followed by a condescending explanation of what constitutes "real" antisemitism. Why is it that every group of people on Earth is free to define their own oppression, except for Jews? Why must Jews listen to non-Jews gaslight them by explaining why antisemitism is not real?

Whatever the answer may be, the Judicial Board was not going to resolve the problem. An internal appeal was filed to the Judicial Board, contesting the validity of the referendum question. The Judicial Board refused to hear the appeal because they "did not have jurisdiction" and that the precedents of the Judicial Board were irrelevant because the "Judicial Board does not use precedents." When the argument was made that this referendum may violate the law, the response from the Board was that "they cannot comment on the law" and refused to hear the case. When the decision was appealed to the SSMU executive, the appeal was denied on procedural grounds without being heard.

Jewish students, however, were not the only ones who noticed the disastrous behaviour of the SSMU. Their lawyers believed that this behaviour openly violated the SSMU's constitution and dropped them as a client when faced with a lawsuit in the Superior Court of Quebec. The SSMU is the subject of not one, but two separate lawsuits related to antisemitism.

Many of the proponents of the SSMU may believe that the "Zionists" control the media, so let me give a simple response to all the attention we have been getting:

We are just not that into you.

The behaviour of the SSMU has become an unholy obsession with Zionism and anyone who believes in Israel, which uncoincidentally is the only Jewish state. I would point out that, for those who, at this point, believe antisemitism and antizionism are distinct, over 90% percent of Jews are supportive of the existence of the state of Israel.[2]

While this has been an utmost concern for the Jewish community, the SSMU's tirade against 90%+ of Je—rather…Israel has become an infatuation to the point where it is no longer just harming Jewish students, it is actively hurting students across Canada. On Wednesday, the SSMU made the decision to burn the bridge with arguably the biggest minority rights' advocate in Canada, Anthony Housefather, MP for Mount-Royal.

Enrolment at McGill has dropped by over 20 percent since the reduction of subsidies for non-Francophone students from outside Quebec who wish to study at English institutions in the province. However, the SSMU is too preoccupied with blaming "the Zionists" for their woes to the point that the organization seems unable to perform its mandate. MP Housefather has been an outspoken leader fighting for ethnic, religious, sexual, and linguistic minorities and the behaviour of the SSMU to target someone for their beliefs directly undermines their own values. MP Housefather denounced the policy of the Coalition avenir Quebec to reduce funding to McGill and Concordia and was invited for a meeting with the SSMU to support students in different ways.

Yet, over a week, the SSMU made the decision to revel in its performative activism rather than make real and meaningful changes that could have a positive impact on thousands of students. This is despite MP Housefather's views on Israel having never changed. Gone are the days when people with opposing views can work together for mutual benefit. Instead, we have a hyper-partisan environment in which performative activism reigns supreme.

[1] Morris, Erika. "McGill Drops University Name from Palestinian Solidarity Group over Social Media Post | CBC News." CBCnews, December 19, 2023. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/mcgill-ssmu-drop-name-palestinian-student-group-1.7063672.

[2] Brym, Robert, Keith Neuman, and Rhonda Lenton, "2018 Survey of Jews in Canada: Final Report" (2018), online (PDF): <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada---final-report.pdf>. P.57, 62.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
RÉDACTEUR EN CHEF
Anna McAllister
Pablo Mhanna-Sandoval

SOCIAL MEDIA DIRECTOR
DIRECTRICE DES RÉSEAUX SOCIAUX
Gabrielle Torrealba

DIRECTOR OF DISTRIBUTION
DIRECTEUR DE DISTRIBUTION
Kamil Chaoui

ART DIRECTOR AND LAYOUT EDITOR
DIRECTRICE ARTISTIQUE ET ÉDITRICE DE MISE EN PAGE
Souang Wu
Amy Huang

COPY EDITORS
SECRÉTAIRES DE RÉDACTION
Kim Baronet
Wisaal Jahangir
Karla Tejeda-Iglesias
Matthew Vamvakas

COLUMNISTS
CHRONIQUEURES ET CHRONIQUEUSES
Ritchie Ngieme
Sophie Rehel

CONTRIBUTORS
CONTRIBUTEURS
AMPL / AMPD
Jamie Fabian
Matthew Boulden

Special thanks to Prairie Koo for designing the layout.

~

The Quid Novi is published weekly by the students of the Faculty of Law at McGill University.
Production is made possible through the direct support of students.
All contents copyright © 2024 Quid Novi.

Les opinions exprimées sont propres aux auteurs et ne reflètent pas nécessairement celles de l'équipe du Quid Novi. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of the McGill Law Students' Association or of McGill University.

Envoyez vos commentaires ou articles avant jeudi 17h00 à quid.law@mcgill.ca.
Toute contribution doit indiquer le nom de l'auteur, son année d'étude ainsi qu'un titre et un sous -titre pour l'article. Les images doivent être soumises séparément. L'article ne sera publié qu'à la discrétion du comité de rédaction, qui basera sa décision sur la politique de rédaction disponible sur notre Facebook @quidnovi.mcgill.